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(56) Documents cited
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(58) Field of search
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(54) **Gaming machines**

(57) A gaming machine such as a 'fruit machine' comprises a machine cabinet which carries on one side thereof two game display units adapted to display first and second independently playable games. The games may have common coin validator and there are various alternatives for replacing each game with other versions. The replacement systems proposed include independently removable modules and the exchange of a minimum of separate components (silk-screened display glass, light box and computer programme card). The games may be played separately or at once, a common credit register being provided. The game modules may be stacked within the cabinet.

The claims were filed later than the filing date within the period prescribed by Rule 25(1) of the Patents Rules 1990.

GAMING MACHINES

5 This invention relates to gaming machines and in particular to so-called "fruit machines". As is well-known, such machines comprise a display means displaying symbols, not necessarily fruits, and a prize is awarded, or credited, in dependence on the combination of symbols displayed on the display means at the end of a game or portion of a game.

10 A conventional fruit machine is arranged to provide a single game, and the cabinet of the machine carries one or more screen-printed glasses through which the display means can be seen, and which carry pictorial information on the game features, a light box behind each
15 glass being arranged to illuminate selected portions of the glass during playing of the game.

20 Although the player is often given the choice as to which features of the game he or she wishes to use, only one overall game can be played.

25 It is, of course, known for machine suppliers and maintenance companies to convert a machine to play a different game by replacing the machine glass/glasses and by fitting the machine with a different game control module.

30 A network of video game machines has also been proposed for arcade use, in which a machine player can select which game he wishes to play on a particular machine, the game programme being transferred to the machine from a central programme store.

35 The present invention is based upon our realisation that there would be considerable attraction to players in a machine which provides a choice of games in one machine cabinet.

Such a machine need not take up any more floor space than a conventional fruit machine, and can be used in situations where there is room for only a single machine.

5 According to our invention a gaming machine assembly comprises a machine cabinet carrying on one side thereof two game display units adapted to display first and second independently playable fruit machine games.

10 Thus, a single cabinet is used to provide two independently playable fruit machine games. The cabinet can be made of substantially the same floor area as a conventional machine, so there is a considerable saving in space over that which would be needed for two separate machines providing the two games.

15 Preferably a common coin validator is provided to receive coins (the term "coin" is used herein to include a token) inserted for playing either game.

20 A game selection means may be provided or, alternatively, each game is operated by respective game control buttons.

The game display units may be part of respective game modules which are independently removable from the machine cabinet, each game
25 module comprising a display panel, associated control buttons and display panel illumination means. Preferably, however, it is so arranged that any game can be replaced simply by exchanging a silk-screened display glass, light box and computer programme card. Thus, any mechanical reels, and the control buttons, are left
30 undisturbed.

A common credit register may be provided, the arrangement being such that credits on the register may be utilised by the player to play either game. Similarly, a common credit register may be provided to
35 record winnings not yet taken, the winnings resulting from games played on either game module.

5 The machine may have a common or independent controller for implementing the two machine games. The controller preferably incorporates two replaceable game programme cards appropriate to the two game units, a different programme card being inserted when a game unit is replaced.

10 It may be arranged that only one game can be played at once. Alternatively, it may be arranged that games can be started and played simultaneously on the two game display units.

Another possibility is to arrange the machine such that one game can be started whilst another game is being played, perhaps after only a brief delay.

15 It is not unusual for players in arcades to play two machines at once, and the invention can enable a player to play two games together on one machine.

20 Whilst the arrangement is preferably such that any individual game unit can be easily removed from the machine and be replaced with an alternative game by simply exchanging respective silk-screened glasses, light boxes and computer game cards, an arrangement in which the cabinet comprises stacked cabinet modules appropriate to the different games might be possible, each module providing a
25 different game.

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CLAIMS

1. An assembly of a gaming machine such as a 'fruit machine' comprising a machine cabinet which carries on
5 one side thereof two game display units adapted to display first and second independently playable games.
2. An assembly of a gaming machine as claimed in claim 1 in which a common coin validator is used to
10 receive coins, as defined herein, which are inserted for playing either game.
3. An assembly of a gaming machine as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2 in which a selection means is
15 provided for selecting a game to be played.
4. An assembly of a gaming machine as claimed in claim 3 in which the selection means is adapted for selecting the games singly or together.
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5. An assembly of a gaming machine as claimed in any one of the preceding claims which has a common controller for implementing the two machine games.
- 25 6. An assembly of a gaming machine as claimed in any one of the preceding claims which incorporates a replaceable programme card for each game.
- 30 7. An assembly of a gaming machine as claimed in any one of the preceding claims in which a common credit register is provided such that the credits on the register may be utilised by the player to play either game.
- 35 8. An assembly of a gaming machine as claimed in any one of the preceding claims in which a common credit

register is provided to record all winnings from either game not yet taken.

5 9. An assembly of a gaming machine as claimed in claim 6, or either of claims 7 and 8 each as appended to claim 6, in which any game can be replaced by exchanging a silk-screened display glass, light box and computer programme card, leaving undisturbed other components including mechanical reels and the control
10 buttons.

15 10. An assembly of a gaming machine as claimed in any of the claims 1-8 in which any game can be replaced by exchanging a respective game module contained within the cabinet, each module comprising a display panel, associated control buttons and display panel illumination means.

20 11. An assembly of a gaming machine as claimed in any of the claims 1-8 in which each game is contained separately in an exchangeable stacked cabinet module.

25 12. An assembly of a gaming machine as claimed in any one of the preceding claims in which the machine cabinet occupies substantially the same floor area as a conventional machine.

30 13. An assembly of a gaming machine substantially as described herein.